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Performing as One: Translating Pedagogy, Rhythm, and Social Relations  
in Diasporic Japanese *Minyo*

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

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by

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The Thesis of Nana Kaneko is approved:

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## ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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Master of Arts, Graduate Program in Music  
University of California, Riverside, June 2013  
Dr. Deborah Wong, Chairperson

This thesis addresses music transmission and pedagogy in a diasporic, transnational setting. In 1966, Matsutoyo Sato Sensei, my Japanese *minyo* folk singing and *shamisen* teacher, left Japan and her position as next in line to inherit and run her teacher's *iemoto* (a formalized, hierarchical master student) school. Seeking a fresh start, she moved to California at the age of twenty-five, and decided to cultivate *minyo* abroad. Using a participant-observer ethnographic methodology, my research addressed how Matsutoyo Sensei's pedagogical methods are both maintained and changed in diaspora. I focus on three areas: (1) Matsutoyo Sensei's emphasis on *nami* (wave, as in the waves of the ocean), which is her metaphor for rhythmic intricacies, an internal pulse, and social relations, (2) the ways that Matsutoyo Sensei's charismatic authority informs her pedagogy, and (3) how Matsutoyo Sensei reconfigures Japanese musical aesthetics and social expectations. By tracing how Matsutoyo Sensei employs *nami* and the

idiosyncrasies of her pedagogical methods, which are based in Japanese aesthetics and adjusted to American sensibilities, I illustrate how she instills oneness for the group and mutual respect, and demonstrate the contributing factors to her success as a music teacher in diaspora. Using Slobin's model of a "diasporic interculture" (1993), I argue that Matsutoyo Sensei's pedagogical work is situated at the intersection of transnational connections between Japan and the United States. Lastly, I argue for the importance of person-centered ethnographies by suggesting that they offer a close, particularized look at how culture is made, sustained, and transmitted.

## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Matsutoyo Sensei and her students</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Rhythm and relationships: <i>nami</i></b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>Sensei’s Charisma and Authority</b> .....	<b>24</b>
<b>Japanese Aesthetics and Music in Diaspora</b> .....	<b>34</b>
<b>Conclusions</b> .....	<b>44</b>
<b>Works Cited</b> .....	<b>51</b>
<b>Appendix I: Glossary</b> .....	<b>55</b>

## List of Illustrations

- Figure 1 Matsutoyo Sato Sensei (Photo by Marisa Kosugi.)..... 1**
- Figure 2 Sensei demonstrating her tissue technique on a local television show (UTB's *Senpai ni Kampai*) with her daughter, Marisa Kosugi (wearing a yellow kimono), on 8/6/2011. (Photos provided by Marisa Kosugi.)..... 7**
- Figure 3 New Year's performance at Weller Court in Little Tokyo on 1/1/13. From left to right: Chie Matsutoyo, Hikaru, Natsu Summer Matsutoyo, Momo, Sensei, Hiromiya Bando (dance), Albert, Marisa Kosugi, Taka Matsutoyo, me. (Photo by Linda Kaneko.) ..... 17**
- Figure 4 Sensei's written notation and my interpretation. (Photo by Nana Kaneko.) ..... 18**
- Figure 5 Sensei leading rehearsal and emphasizing her pulse by banging on a frying pan. (Photo by Marisa Kosugi.)..... 20**
- Figure 6 My *shamisen* lesson with Sensei. (Screenshot taken by Nana Kaneko.)..... 29**
- Figure 7 Sensei with Marisa (left) and Natsu (right) in the 2012 Nisei Week parade as a Pioneer Award recipient. (Photo by Nana Kaneko.)..... 31**
- Figure 8 Performance at the Orange County Buddhist Church. From left to right: Momo, me, Sensei, Mine Matsutoyo, Yu Matsutoyo, Chie Matsutoyo. (Photo by Linda Kaneko.)..... 45**

## Introduction

In 1966, Matsutoyo Sato Sensei, my seventy-three year old Japanese *minyo* folk singing and *shamisen* teacher (Figure 1), left her position as next in line to inherit and run her teacher's *iemoto* (a formalized, hierarchical master student) school in Japan.



**Figure 1 Matsutoyo Sato Sensei (Photo by Marisa Kosugi.)**

Seeking a fresh start, she moved to California at the age of twenty-five, and decided to cultivate *minyo* abroad. In Japan, her position was set as the next inheritor of her teacher's *iemoto* school, and it would have been far easier than establishing her own

school in California, but Sensei<sup>1</sup> is not one to settle for less and has professed several times how much she enjoys cultivating things from the ground up. Matsutoyo *Kai* (organization/school) was established in San Francisco in 1966 shortly after Sensei arrived from Japan, and by 1976 Sensei had trained around seventy students to obtain their *natori* (professional performer status) in San Francisco alone. Sensei moved to the Los Angeles area that year, extending Matsutoyo Kai to Southern California where it is now based.

In this essay, I argue that Sensei's pedagogical methods lie within what Mark Slobin calls a "diasporic interculture" (1993) by taking influences from both Japan and the United States and then fusing contrasting aspects of their societal expectations. Slobin defines the diasporic interculture as "the linkages that subcultures set up across national boundaries" (Slobin 1993:64). A study of Sensei's pedagogy expands discussions of traditional Japanese music by illustrating the ways that music pedagogy reflects cultural change. Through a discussion of the diasporic interculture within Sensei's pedagogical methods, I aim to address how tradition is transmitted and executed in diaspora. How has Sensei restructured *minyo* to both maintain and transform the tradition in diaspora? How does transnationalism and contrasting behavioral expectations impact Sensei's pedagogical methods? What does a person-centered ethnography provide for studying music in a cultural context that other types of ethnographies may not?

*Minyo* consists of traditional Japanese songs that are historically connected to various forms of manual labor and were sung by workers to ease the toil and monotony of

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<sup>1</sup> From here on, I refer to Matsutoyo Sato Sensei as Sensei. When the word *sensei* is used to refer to teachers more broadly, I present it in italicized lowercase.

their daily lives. *Minyo* are regionally specific and many songs contain in its title the name of the prefecture it is from; in fact, they are often a symbol of pride, evoking and satisfying feelings of nostalgia. By the 1920s *minyo* was a standardized, urban pan-Japanese phenomenon transmitted primarily through formal teacher-student relationships, although informal, oral transmission of *minyo* songs in rural areas still exists as well. *Minyo* as a genre reflects Japanese modernity through the ways it has been reconfigured to suit changing needs over time. In the United States, *minyo* is most commonly found at *Obon* festivals (Japanese Buddhist festival to worship the spirit of the ancestors) as dance music for *bon odori* (communal dancing). The bulk of my discussion will focus on the role of *minyo* in California through a focused study of Sensei's pedagogical methods, which I tie to Slobin's "diasporic interculture," by arguing that her teaching techniques take place at the nexus of transnational links across American and Japanese cultural and societal expectations.

In his introduction to *Performing Ethnomusicology* (2004), Ted Solís notes how "native" teachers of world music ensembles often formulate their pedagogical methods based on the freedom they have as traditional music educators in diaspora. He mentions how "Racy had never taught his ensemble, and Susilo had little experience doing so, before coming to America; they formed methodologies largely in response to the American *tabula rasa*" (Solís 2004:9). Like Racy and Susilo, Sensei understands the benefits of teaching in diaspora, where pedagogical methods can be adjusted and created to deviate from systematic and often restrictive methods. Because of the freedom allotted to traditional world music teachers in the United States, there is no clear, simple

relationship between the host country and the homeland when considering their pedagogical methods. This is precisely why a consideration of Sensei's teaching methods in relation to Slobin's "diasporic interculture" illuminates the complex internal structure of diasporic networks.

When I first started *minyō* lessons with Matsutoyo Sensei in December 2011, much of her focus was on enunciation and voice projection—techniques that are easily explained but difficult to execute. As the lessons continued, Sensei started alluding to a deeper goal that she sets for all her students. More recently, Sensei has continually emphasized the need for her students to understand her *nami* (wave, as in the waves of the ocean). The *nami* is a metaphor that Sensei uses to structure her pedagogical methods in several ways. At the most basic and apparent level, Sensei states that all *minyō* songs embody a *nami* (wave), and need to undulate back and forth in order to be sung and played correctly. In addition to the *nami* as a way to illustrate rhythms and accents in the music itself, Sensei also uses it as a metaphor for her internal pulse, which demands keen observation from her students. The *nami* is also used to describe social relations, encouraging oneness and unity, and respect for others in the context of a group *nami*. Lastly, the *nami* is a way for Sensei to instill her authority as a charismatic leader who has successfully established herself in diaspora from the ground up as a magnetic individual with a profound dedication to her craft. By tracing the various ways that Sensei employs *nami* and the idiosyncrasies of her pedagogical methods, which are based in Japanese aesthetics and adjusted to American sensibilities, I strive to demonstrate the contributing factors to her success as a pedagogue in diaspora.

William P. Malm has written about the unseen and hidden “mysteries” of Japan, stating, “...the word *hidden* does not necessarily mean something secret in the world of Japanese music. Rather it refers to sets of procedures within that tradition that are so ‘natural’ that many excellent Japanese authors and musicians tend not to speak of them” (Malm 1986:2). The natural procedures to which Malm refers in the context of music lessons include the need to understand Japanese music lessons as socially and aesthetically structured and not simply musical, as well as the need to look inside as much as outside (i.e., insight), and to develop a patient sense of time. Since Americans are not culturally trained to understand these procedures in the same ways as the Japanese, Sensei adjusts her pedagogical methods to maintain Japanese procedures in relation to American sensibilities.

Person-centered ethnographies offer a close, particularized look at how culture is made, sustained, and transmitted. Jay Keister states that the person-centered ethnography is “one methodological remedy to the problem of creating essentialist models of music cultures that obscure the roles played by individuals in society” (Keister 2004:4). He points out how studies of traditional Japanese music in particular are generally lacking in analysis of individuals’ impact on Japanese culture because categorical and descriptive studies tend to dominate. A person-centered ethnography of Sensei provides a lens through which to see how cultural and societal expectations impact the pedagogy and transmission of traditional music in diaspora.

## **Matsutoyo Sensei and her students**

12/9/2011

*As I park my car and walk towards the gate, I can hear Sensei's dog barking excitedly in the background. I take care in closing the gate behind me and walk around the main house to the miniature home behind it. I greet the dog in the enclosure while taking off my shoes, and enter to the sound of the hot water dispenser as tea is being prepared for me.*

*Sensei's house is located on a suburban residential street in Gardena, CA, but upon entering her lesson space, one experiences the illusion of being transported to Japan through the various details within the space including tatami (woven straw) flooring, a wall with several rectangular windows and a glass door resembling a shoji (a sliding room divider consisting of translucent paper over a frame of wood) separating the front tatami room from the practice room, several shamisen (three stringed lute) lining the walls, and a Toto toilet (modern Japanese electric toilet seat with buttons that heat the seat and spray jets of water for washing) in the bathroom.*

*The largest room in the miniature home, known as the practice room, is split into three distinct sections. A table with one chair on either side is placed in the center of the room, and this is where lessons take place. Sensei sits against the back wall next to her shamisen, keyboard, tuning devices, and metronome. There are always two fresh cups of tea on the table to soothe the throats of teacher and student during lessons. On the rightmost side of the room, a dining table is placed across the sink right outside of the bathroom. This table is used as a social space to chat over tea, enjoy meals, and help Sensei bond with her students.*

*When performing minyo, collaboration and camaraderie between all the performers is critical as everyone relies on one another for a successful performance. A minyo singer rarely performs without the accompaniment of multiple shamisen, a shakuhachi (end-blown bamboo flute), taiko and kane (drums and bell), hayashi (accompanying singers), and dancers. By bonding with other performers over meals at this table which provides a separate space from the practice and performance setting, the quality of performance is greatly improved as the closeness and comfort among performers shine on stage. At the leftmost side of the room, there is a modest, but noticeably elevated stage for singers to stand on during rehearsals.*

*At my very first lesson, Sensei had me sing a song of my choice for her, then, after commenting how most people sing quietly and rely on a microphone, she had me sing/yell "Aaaa" as loud as I can and to try to sustain the note for as long as possible. Then, she quickly proceeded to throw a cushion on the floor and had me do as many sit-ups as possible, while she stood on my feet to hold me in place. She explained how the projection of sound should come from the stomach like the way a baby cries. She*

*demonstrated sustained notes coming from the stomach, back of the throat, and nose area. One of Sensei's tests to see if the singing voice is expelled correctly is to place a very flimsy, yet upright strand of tissue in front of the mouth. If the tissue is blown on, it of course falls flat, and once air is no longer hitting it, it spikes back up. According to Sensei, when a sustained vowel is sung, there should not be any air released from the mouth, thus the tissue should not fall. In order to achieve this, the breath must be held and gathered in the core. She tore off a small piece of tissue paper and put it in front of her mouth as she robustly voiced various sounds; the tissue never fell over.<sup>2</sup>(Figure 2)*



**Figure 2 Sensei demonstrating her tissue technique on a local television show (UTB's *Senpai ni Kampai*) with her daughter, Marisa Kosugi (wearing a yellow kimono), on 8/6/2011. (Photos provided by Marisa Kosugi.)**

At the time of this writing, Sensei has approximately fifty students, most of whom are Japanese immigrant women in their fifties through eighties who were drawn to *minyo* out of nostalgia and a longing to reconnect with their homeland. She also has several

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<sup>2</sup> Italicized sections are based on my revised and expanded fieldnotes, inspired by Gregory F. Barz's argument for the inclusion of fieldnotes in our ethnographies (Barz 2008 [1997]:207).

Japanese students in their thirties and forties (also mostly women), many of whom learned *minyo* in Japan as children, and after being away from it for most of their life, had a desire to revisit it after they moved to California. Sensei has a handful of students under the age of thirty, but traditional *minyo* is generally unappealing to younger people because they see it as outdated and difficult to relate to. One of Sensei's goals is to break this misconception and to try to make *minyo* more appealing for younger generations.

The majority of Sensei's students are Japanese who immigrated to California at a relatively late age after World War II.<sup>3</sup> Thus, Sensei's immediate circle of students is mostly not part of the generation-specific lineage of Japanese Americans, but her audience is another matter; that is, most of the venues and events at which Matsutoyo Kai performs are profoundly connected to Japanese American history and heritage, warranting a brief overview of Japanese American history.

### Historical and Cultural Background

Japanese Americans in the 1930s were almost evenly divided between *Issei* (first generation Japanese American) and *Nisei* (second generation Japanese American), and by that time, approximately forty percent of the Japanese immigrants had made America their permanent home (Takaki 1998[1989]:181). Like the Chinese before them, they experienced severe racial discrimination, culminating in the incarceration of 120,000 Japanese Americans in internment camps. Issued by Franklin D. Roosevelt on February 19, 1942, Executive Order 9066 forced Japanese and Japanese Americans living in California, as well as western Washington and Oregon and southern Arizona, to relocate

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<sup>3</sup> She also has a few Japanese American and Chinese/Chinese American students, but most are Japanese immigrants or Japanese foreign nationals.

into internment camps (ibid.: 379). The internment dismantled Japanese American communities on the West Coast and then fueled a powerful cultural revival by Japanese Americans in post-war California as they embraced Japanese culture while also feeling immense pressure to assimilate and prove their “American-ness.” During that period, Southern California, particularly Los Angeles and its periphery, was reestablished as the epicenter of Japanese American ethnic pride. Because of this history, the preservation of Japanese traditional arts in California is of utmost importance, and Sensei is one of the main influential figures contributing to this through her engagement with the Japanese American community.

Lon Kurashige (2002) argues that the postwar Japanese American community strove for both assimilation and ethnic retention. He focuses on the history of the Nisei Week festival, a historically weeklong celebration established by the *Issei* during the Great Depression to “rewire racism to serve their own collective needs and interest” (Kurashige 2002:6), and to encourage patronage from Japanese American youth of that time (*Nisei*), to promote ethnic pride, racial harmony, and international friendship. Kurashige notes how “ethnic traditions...may have been both preserved and abandoned, but more often they were rearticulated on the basis of perceived opportunities to gain broad-based acceptance, legitimacy, and class status – an American dream for any subjugated minority” (ibid.:6). Similarly, Sensei rearticulates her pedagogical methods to fit the needs of her students in California. Today, the Nisei Week festivities are held over approximately one month starting with the opening ceremony in mid July, and the closing ceremony, culminating with the parade and *bon odori* (communal dancing to

honor the spirit of the ancestors), in mid August. Matsutoyo Kai plays an integral role in the festivities by providing live music throughout the month, and Sensei is thus part of an extended annual public moment focused on Japanese American pride and cultural memory.

Although many of Sensei's students are Japanese women who immigrated to California at a relatively late age, Sensei's pedagogical adjustments are place based and applicable to those students as well. It seems to me that Sensei is not necessarily adapting her methods for specific students, but adapting more so to the idea of teaching outside of Japan. For her, leaving Japan meant more than just leaving that country to rebuild *minyo* elsewhere; leaving Japan also meant leaving behind the more regimented and structured teaching methods that are tied to Japan as a place. Sensei treats those older Japanese ladies in a similar way to her younger students by implementing innovative pedagogical techniques and explicitness, yet maintains Japanese practices by teaching exclusively in the Japanese language. Although Sensei has the skills to explain basic concepts in English, she refuses and carries on in Japanese even with her Chinese American students who hardly speak a word of it. This is one way that Sensei maintains tradition and asserts her authority in diaspora.

David W. Hughes's book *Traditional Folk Song in Modern Japan: Sources, Sentiment, and Society* (2008) is the only comprehensive overview of Japanese *minyo* written in English,<sup>4</sup> likely because there are few diasporic *minyo* groups in comparison to

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<sup>4</sup> For more compact introductions to Japan's folk music, see Groemer 2001, Koizumi and Hughes 2001, for a discussion on oral transmission through *shamisen* lessons, see Tokumaru 1986, and for a methodical deconstruction of *minyo* melodies, see Kakinoki 1975.

other classicized Japanese art forms (e.g., *gagaku*, *nagauta*, *nihon buyo*, *noh*, *taiko*), and because *minyo* is often regarded as *furu-kusai* (literally, “smelling of old”; outdated) and *gehin* (unrefined, low), having historically been sung by laborers. Hughes traces the development of *minyo* from 1977- 2008<sup>5</sup> in the context of extensive urbanization, modernization, Westernization, and globalization in the latter nineteenth century. He traces the history of *minyo* from rural, localized working songs to its development as a standardized, urban, pan-Japanese phenomenon, classicized in the twentieth century through the *iemoto* system and professional *minyo* performers, as well as the development and burgeoning of *minyo* preservation societies (*hozonkai*), recordings, broadcasts, contests, and concerts.

Existing scholarship on Japanese musics in diaspora include: in the United States, Susan Asai’s articles (1995, 1997) on *Sansei* (third generation Japanese American) artists in urban California, Minako Waseda’s (2000) dissertation on Japanese American musical culture in Southern California, Barbara Sellers-Young’s (2002) ethnography of *nihon buyo* (Japanese dance) transplanted and taught in Oregon, and Sean Ichiro Manes’s (2009) account of his Japanese American *shamisen* teacher, to which I will return later in this essay. These works identify generation-specific patterns in the musical culture of Japanese Americans and provide models for how Japanese art music traditions change in diaspora, but what they do not focus on in any depth is how transnationalism directly impacts the pedagogical methods and behavioral expectations of a specific teacher. Scholarship on Japanese musics in Latin America include Shuhei Hosokawa’s (2000)

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<sup>5</sup> For the evolution of a particular *minyo* song, ‘Soran Bushi,’ see Hughes 2001.

examination of singing contests among Japanese-Brazilians in Brazil, his (2002) account of Orquesta de la Luz, a Japanese salsa band that became popular in Latin America, and Dale A. Olsen's (2004) musical history and ethnography of the *Nikkei* (Japanese diasporic) community in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Peru, and Paraguay. Abundant scholarship exists on *taiko* in diaspora (Asai 1985; Combs 1985; Yano 1985; Waseda 2000; Yoon 2001; Wong 2004; to name a few). These studies tend to focus on cross-cultural musical genres that highlight issues of identity, authenticity, and the performativity of "Japanese-ness."

My study contributes to ethnomusicological scholarship through an account of *minyo* in Southern California with a focus on Sensei's pedagogical methods. My focus is not on cross-cultural pedagogy so much as it is about the ways pedagogical methods must be both maintained and changed to effectively transmit a Japanese musical tradition in diaspora. I will trace Sensei's efforts to both maintain and change *minyo* pedagogy in diaspora through three areas which include: (1) Sensei's emphasis on *nami* (wave, as in the waves of the ocean), which is her metaphor for rhythmic intricacies, an internal pulse, and social relations, (2) the ways that Sensei's charismatic authority informs her pedagogy, and (3) how Sensei reconfigures Japanese musical aesthetics and social expectations.

### **Rhythm and relationships: *nami***

1/8/2013

*As usual, Sensei went into very minute details about ornamentation and where specific emphases should be placed. The song I am currently working on is "Hiroshima Kiyari Ondo," a celebratory song that is appropriate for all the New Year's events we have been*

*performing at recently. For this song, as is the case with most other minyo songs, the emphases should be placed in a manner where the voice moves like the waves of the ocean (heavy-light-light-heavy-light-light). Sensei told me that the next step is to put more nuances into my singing instead of singing note for note. The way to do this is to use a combination of projection from the core and the throat, to hold back on some notes while projecting full force for others, and to sing melismas liberally yet intricately, all while maintaining the flow of the nami.*

As Tomie Hahn puts it, “to study transmission is to view a process that instills theory and cultural concepts of embodiment...transmission concerns the information flow between teacher and student – the sender and receiver cycle – and embraces the personal relationships that evolve” (Hahn 2007:2). In addition to a metaphor for a swung rhythm accented by melismatic intricacies, the *nami* is also a pulse that Sensei internalizes and expects her students to feel. Unless every performer is in sync with Sensei’s pulse and lead, the *nami* cannot emerge. Sensei employs *nami* not only as a technical device but also as a tool to sculpt her relationships with her students as a bearer of authority, while also encouraging unity and mutual respect amongst her students. I will trace the etymology of the word to better outline how Sensei transmits her *nami* to her students through a metaphorical field of related meanings.

The *kanji* (adopted logographic Chinese characters that are used in the modern Japanese writing system) character for *nami* (波) is a phono-semantic compound, combining the semantic 氵 (“water”) with the phonetic 皮 (*ha*) to create the meaning, waves of water. The character 皮 refers to skin, which accounts for the reason why *nami* can also be used to reference ripples on the skin as people age. According to the Kojien

dictionary (広辞苑)<sup>6</sup>, *nami* has multiple meanings. On the most basic and literal level, *nami* is the undulating surface of water, a billow, surge, tide, or current. It also refers to anything with the movement of a wave, undulating unevenly and shifting from high to low, such as when the sky is regarded as a vast sea with waves of clouds, when academic grades fluctuate up and down, when wisteria petals waver with the wind, or when someone is “swallowed” by a wave of people (Shinmura 1955:1926).

Sensei employs *nami* as defined above to illustrate the ways that various *minyo* songs rhythmically undulate back and forth, and how these rhythms are emphasized through nuances and accents. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) argue that our conceptual system is largely metaphorical and that the way we think, what we experience, and what we do everyday is very much a matter of metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson 1980:3). If this is the case, the *nami* as a metaphor is indicative of the way Sensei thinks and is informed by her experiences. Her pedagogical methods are characterized by her experiences, and presented in ways that are subtle, yet graspable. Lakoff and Johnson assert that the dominant views on meaning in Western philosophy and linguistics are inadequate since they do not consider what people find meaningful in their lives (ibid.:ix). The *nami* is not simply a linguistic metaphor that Sensei uses to enhance her pedagogy; it embodies her thought processes as she implements aspects of Japanese and American culture into teaching *minyo* in diaspora. Sensei uses *nami* as a metaphor in at least two

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<sup>6</sup> The Japanese equivalent of the Oxford English Dictionary

distinct ways. The first refers to the music in terms of rhythm and accents, while the second is in terms of connecting to her internal pulse.

Metrical *minyo* songs<sup>7</sup> are virtually always duple, either simple (2/4) or compound (6/8). The verb *hazumu* usually implies a 6/8 meter and can be appropriately translated as swing (as in jazz terminology), because a bar of 6/8 in *minyo* is mostly realized as the sequence of eighth-note, sixteenth-note, eighth-note, sixteenth-note (i.e., long-short-long-short). (Hughes 2008:26-27). When Sensei explains the *hazumi*, which helps to capture the rhythmic *nami* of a particular song, she simply plays it and expects her students to observe, listen, and take in her technique. Sensei's daughter, Marisa Kosugi,<sup>8</sup> who holds a *natori* and is an accomplished vocalist and *shamisen* player, noted, "if you don't use the *hazumi*, it's really difficult. And if you watch the timing of her hand, you just naturally learn it, but you have to listen, watch her. It's just opening your heart." Thus, the *nami* and *hazumi* work together as a way to connect with Sensei's rhythmic pulse.

Charles Keil asserts, "music, to be personally involving and socially valuable, must be 'out of time' and 'out of tune'" (Keil 1987:275). His theory of participatory discrepancies helps to explain the importance and nuances of how Sensei thinks about *nami*. By "out of time" and "out of tune," Keil means in relation to institutional standardization, suggesting that the little discrepancies in musicking can inform us about the "speaker's meanings" to define situations. He argues that the speaker's meanings

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<sup>7</sup> I have yet to learn a *minyo* song in free meter as these are reserved for more advanced students.

<sup>8</sup> Because the setting of this ethnography is an American community, I have written Japanese names using the custom followed in the United States of the family name (or in this case, *natori* last name) last, as in Marisa Kosugi, rather than the Japanese custom of the family name first, as in Kosugi Marisa.

carry great power, particularly when “lexical meanings” are various and ambiguous for a particular phenomenon (ibid.:275). Viewed in the context of participatory discrepancies, Sensei’s *nami* is very intentional; being “out of time” is a crucial aspect of her pedagogical method. Sensei discourages the use of notation, because, as Marisa states, “then you have to listen.” The rhythmic *nami* cannot be notated since it is a pulse that Sensei feels, so that “out of timeness” can only be felt through participation.

Keil also argues that “it is the little discrepancies within a jazz drummer’s beat, between bass and drums, between rhythm section and soloists, that create ‘swing’ and invite us to participate” (ibid.:277). While Sensei’s objective in *minyō* is to create a “swing” through *nami*, the primary, and in fact, only discrepancy that should exist is within Sensei’s pulse. As Marisa notes,

it’s the combination of having the live *shamisen* players, then you have this *taiko* player, *kane*, you have the vocalists, you have *odori*, and then you have *hayashi*, you have everything. (Figure 3) How are you able to make that as one? *Sore wa group no nami da yo ne* (That’s the group’s *nami* right)?

Sensei commands the attention of her group by imposing her *nami* on the other performers as long as they are willing to listen to her. Keil describes participatory discrepancies as a controlled imperfection that is one source of liberatory power in any culture’s “rhythm section” as an “incessant split-second negotiation” and “constant give-and-take” (Keil 1995:12). Sensei’s *nami* is a controlled imperfection that can only be felt and not notated, and something that comes naturally to her when she performs due to years of experience. She knows where the emphases should be placed and how the songs should flow, and it is up to the rest of us to embody and allow her *nami* to direct us as we perform.



**Figure 3** New Year's performance at Weller Court in Little Tokyo on 1/1/13. From left to right: Chie Matsutoyo, Hikaru, Natsu Summer Matsutoyo, Momo, Sensei, Hiromiya Bando (dance), Albert, Marisa Kosugi, Taka Matsutoyo, me. (Photo by Linda Kaneko.)

Sensei's use of the *nami* metaphor as a rhythmic tool is not simply to stress the meter of a song, but to bring life to the vocal and *shamisen* parts that fit within the meter. By accenting certain syllables, while holding back on others, a separate pulse (the *nami*) emerges within the meter. The accents are further emphasized by vocal ornamentations known as *kobushi* or *goro*. Adding excessive ornamentation makes the songs less tasteful, and Sensei uses the metaphor of a bouncing ball in conjunction with her *nami* metaphor to illustrate where the *kobushi* belongs to maintain the *nami*, and how to sing them. While the vocal melody undulates and the accents (the impact of a ball hitting the ground) enhance this nuance, the *kobushi* follows the accent (the ball flying back into the air after

impact). A specific example of this is a section from “Nikko Waraku Odori,” where the vocal line has two points of impact (where the ball bounces) and is followed by *kobushi*. (Figure 4) illustrates the way that Sensei has this particular section notated in her handwritten songbook, with a comparison of a jotting I made after the lesson based on Sensei’s bouncing ball metaphor. Sensei explains this concept quite clearly, and although it is immensely challenging to imitate her musicking, her directions are explicit.

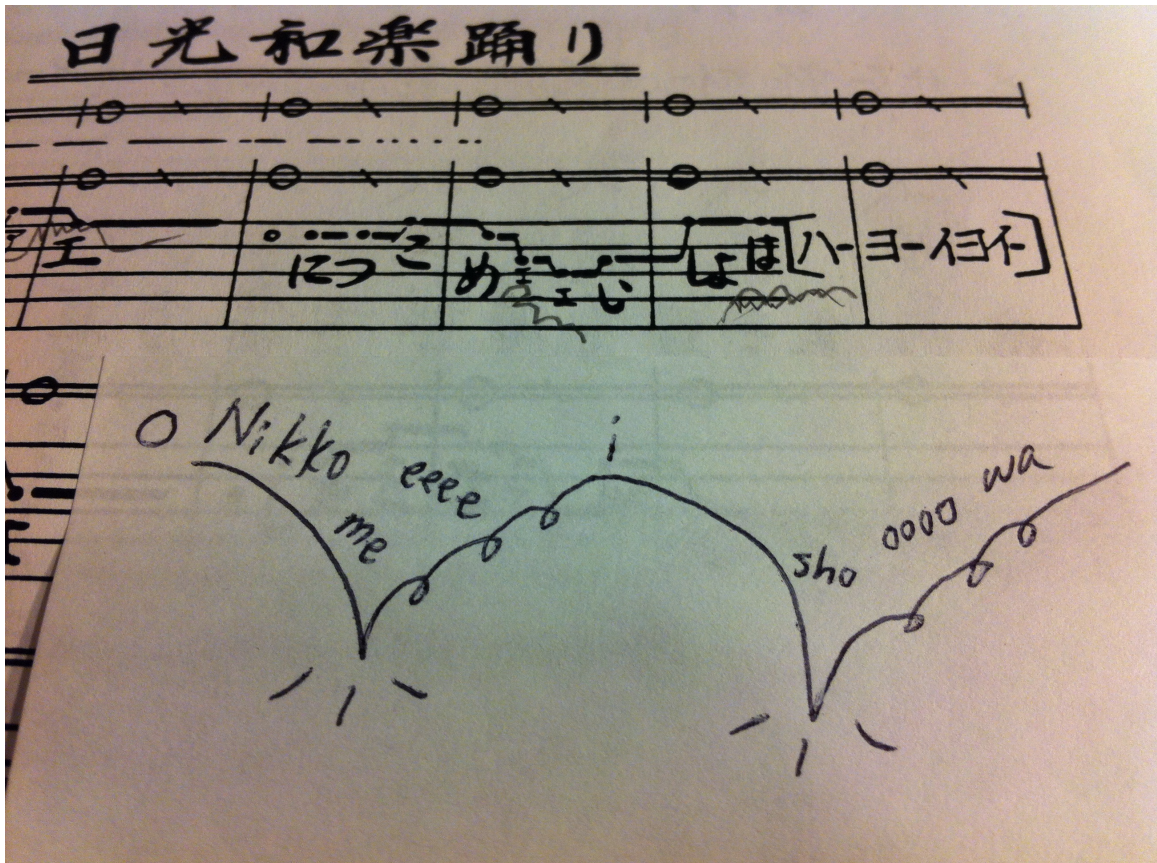


Figure 4 Sensei's written notation and my interpretation. (Photo by Nana Kaneko.)

Conversely, Sensei’s use of *nami* as her internal pulse demands a more conceptual, affective understanding. The Kojien dictionary presents a few abstract alternatives to the preceding definitions. *Nami* can also refer to something fleeting and ephemeral,

something that disappears easily (Shinmura 1955:1926). Sensei implies the ephemerality of her *nami* by alluding to the need to connect with her through respect for her teachings during lessons, and to be able to transmit that flow into our playing when practicing at home without her directing presence. In this respect, *nami* filters cultural categories of deference and hierarchy in Japanese culture by commanding respect. Occasionally, Sensei will refer to the pulse of a song as the “wave,” by saying “*wave ga aru deshou?* (There’s a wave, remember?),” but when referring to her internal pulse, which commands respect, she always refers to it as “my *nami*” and never as “my wave.” Sensei’s choice of language here reveals the way that she links the Japanese language to cultural notions of authority and hierarchy, and uses English to refer to *nami* for more explicit references to rhythm.

2/5/2013

*In rehearsal, Sensei barked at the shamisens, stating that they need to connect to her pulse, her nami, and that each of them are playing in their own style at their own pace. (Figure 5) The majority of them nodded without so much as a glance at Sensei, then remained fixed on their notation or bachi hand. Sensei proceeded with the rehearsal without mentioning the nami again, and while the shamisens were sounding more like a unified group towards the end, the nami that Sensei hoped the group would attain did not emerge.*

*Afterwards, I spoke to her top vocal student, Natsu Summer Matsutoyo, and asked her if this emphasis on the nami is unique to Sensei or if it is a common characteristic of minyo pedagogy. Natsu said that the nami is definitely unique to Sensei, as she has had experience with other minyo instructors. She said her previous instructor focused on kobushi (melismas) and where to place them, and basically how the song should be sung in terms of tone (upbeat, solemn, passionately, etc.). She said we are really fortunate to have Sensei as our teacher because she knows so much about minyo, not only in terms of technique (how to sing it, where the emphases are placed), but also the meaning, story, and history behind each song, as well as how all the components (vocals, shamisen, taiko, kane, shakuhachi) need to meld together to create a single unit that connects to her nami.*



**Figure 5 Sensei leading rehearsal and emphasizing her pulse by banging on a frying pan. (Photo by Marisa Kosugi.)**

Sensei encourages (but does not require) her students to audio record their lessons. Marisa observed that when students fail to record their lessons, "...they don't remember what Sensei's actually trying to teach them. So what they do is when they go home they just want to practice so they look at the *fumen* (notation). So they learn the *fumen*, but once they come back then they lose the *nami*." This is not to say that Sensei is trying to create mechanical clones of herself, but that *nami* in this sense is a tool for Sensei to get her students to connect with her, and as a result, to each other. Sensei's *nami* can be audio recorded, but it is ultimately up to her students to listen attentively to it and to focus on

embodying it. In sum, the *nami* is Sensei's internal pulse, it cannot be written down, and her students must connect with it, go with it, and respect it, in order for the members of Matsutoyo Kai to coalesce as a single unit on stage.

As Marisa notes, "the *nami*... it's about *otagai* (each other), listening to each other and trying to find the connection." Marisa's word choice of *otagai* is particularly telling of what Sensei aims to transmit when employing her metaphor in the context of a group *nami*. *Otagai* means each other, but with a connotation of mutuality, suggesting reciprocal feelings between two people, which emphasizes togetherness. The phrase, *otagai sama* means "same here," or "me too," implying that a person fully understands someone else's sentiments. Marisa could have alternatively chosen to use the word *aite* (a companion), but this word does not emphasize the mutuality and togetherness that *otagai* does, and could also carry negative connotations when used to mean an opponent or adversary in a different context. The emphasis on mutuality and togetherness is precisely what Sensei strives for with her students, and this unity can only be obtained through a group effort to comply with Sensei's authority and respect for each other. Thus, *nami* in this context is about social relationships and group dynamics; it is a way for Sensei to assert her authority, while also encouraging mutual respect amongst her students as they strive for the same goal of connecting to her *nami*. The *nami* is thus key to Sensei's diasporic intercultural: it is a way for Sensei to create connections between Japan and the United States by transmitting aspects of Japanese culture and societal expectations more explicitly to students in the United States, and thus maintaining links across those national boundaries.

Oneness and unity are of utmost importance to Sensei even though she only alludes to it from time to time. In considering participatory discrepancies in jazz, Charles Keil notes how most musicians conceptualize their work as playing together rather than as in consistent and deliberate tension with each other. Jazz musicians generally respect each performer's unique feel for time and it is the bringing together of discrepant personalities that generates different kinds of groove or swing (Keil 1995:8). In Sensei's case, the *nami* is about uniting discrepant personalities and styles into a single unit under her feel for time.

In speculating about the group *nami*, Marisa stated, "*dou yatte hitotsu ni naru* (How can we make it become one)? It's not like we practice all the time together, and we're all different personalities. Maybe it's just trying to figure an easier way to make everyone understand that it's the oneness, unity." Veering away from notation seems to be one way of strengthening the group *nami*. Keil notes how participatory discrepancies suggest that we "1) put mimesis before analysis; 2) figure out how to let mimesis guide what analysis we do; 3) learn from our analysis how to improve our mimesis; so that 4) more people will want to get into a groove and keep the loops going" (ibid.:10). By focusing our attention on the way Sensei sings and plays different songs and by embodying her *nami* through keen observations and imitation before resorting to the notation as a mnemonic device, the group *nami* or in Keil's terms, "the groove" will emerge, be sustained, and ultimately unite the group as a single performing unit.

The Kojien dictionary also notes that *nami* in the context of riding a wave suggests the need to rely on one's own force to conduct oneself (e.g., to go with the flow)

(Shinmura 1955:1926). Sensei's pedagogical methods are filled with idiosyncrasies that have been developed through her own experiences and keen observations. She has been extremely observant since childhood, for example, by learning how to play mahjong at the age of five by simply sitting on her father's lap and watching him play with others. She became so skilled that she would replace someone if they left their seat and if she won, she would be rewarded with an *unagi don* (eel with rice). When she became an *uchi deshi* (a live-in apprentice who trains under and assists a *sensei* on a full time basis) for Matsuko Sato, the skill of keen observation stuck with Sensei, as she carefully listened to the way her *sensei* played the *shamisen* as she was massaging her, and tried to recreate that exact sound later. Marisa noted, "so everything, her experience is more just listening, watching, and just trying to steal whatever she could." Thus, Sensei developed the *nami* metaphor out of her own experiences, realizing that observation is the key to success. The importance of observation ties all the various uses of Sensei's *nami* together. In every context that Sensei uses *nami*, students are expected to observe and listen for it.

Lakoff and Johnson state how metaphors are imaginative and creative, giving us a new understanding of our experience. They can give new meaning to our pasts, to our daily activity, and to what we know and believe (Lakoff and Johnson 1980:139). Through the *nami*, Sensei teaches her students the importance of observation, not just during lessons, but also in our daily activities, and to take those observations and transform them into something more that informs our understanding of our surroundings. She encourages this through her charisma, while also enforcing it through her authority. Since notions of hierarchical respect and devotion are not nearly as commonplace in Western musical

practices as they are in traditional Japanese musical practices, Sensei instills these ideals by commanding and encouraging keen observation.

### **Sensei's Charisma and Authority**

2/17/2012

*Sensei had me stand and sing sustained vowels, and continually punched my stomach while I expelled the notes. She said my voice shouldn't waver when she hits me if my core is strong. My voice didn't waver, which was a good sign. She told me that I should think of expelling a loud voice as arguing or fighting with her, and that I should try to outdo her. She asserted that she constantly trains to make sure that she can do better than her students.*

Sensei's goal is particularly telling not only of her unique pedagogical methods, but also of her charismatic personality. She has made innumerable sacrifices, both personal and professional, to cultivate *minyo* in the United States. Sensei takes pride in presenting Matsutoyo Kai as a group that never refuses a performance request since her life mission is to expose as many communities as possible to the merits of *minyo* through performances and lessons.<sup>9</sup> Sensei's emphasis on unity and connecting with her extends beyond her lessons as she frequently encourages social events to bring the group closer together since the dynamics of the members offstage manifest onstage. Although she is strict and appears reserved in public, Sensei is very caring and treats her students as if they are her own children.

Our after-lesson conversations and occasional adventures offer a window on Sensei's character, helping me understand why her students are so determined to please

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<sup>9</sup> Matsutoyo Kai became a non-profit organization in 2006, and while Matsutoyo Kai board members are actively seeking grants to cover expenses, Sensei continues to accept all performance requests even if they are unpaid, because her goal is to extend *minyo* to as many audiences as possible.

her and fulfill her dreams for the organization.<sup>10</sup> *Minyo* is a genre of music that expresses the toil and hardships of laborers, but should be performed lightheartedly, energetically, and without restraint. In this respect, *minyo* as a genre really captures the essence of Sensei's character. According to Simon Frith, "music, like identity, is both performance and story, describes the social in the individual and the individual in the social, the mind in the body and the body in the mind; identity, like music, is a matter of both ethics and aesthetics" (Frith 1996:109). When Sensei says *minyo* is her life, she means it on a number of levels. As Anne K. Rasmussen states,

A musician's musicality is the result of a patchwork of experience [and] collections of encounters and choices: pastiches of performances they have experienced, the lessons they have taken, the people with whom they have played, the other musicians they admire, other musics that they play or enjoy, and the technical and cognitive limitations of their own musicianship" (Rasmussen 2004:225).

While Rasmussen limits a musician's musicality to experiences and choices pertaining to music, I would argue that Sensei's musicality, namely in regards to *minyo*, and her pedagogical choices, go beyond her musical experiences and are broadly and most closely tied to her life experiences, especially as a young woman who came to the United States in her twenties in the mid 1960s, and had to build her organization from the ground

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<sup>10</sup> Sensei once admitted that she has always been rebellious and always got into trouble as a child. She told me about the time she piled chalk dust on a ledge above the classroom door so that it all fell on her teacher when she came in the door, and how her punishment was to carry heavy buckets of water, which she would rest on the floor with a smug grin when the teacher was not looking. Sensei certainly hasn't lost this rebellious nature as she recently purchased a jeep for \$1000 off of the street and insisted that I go for a wild ride with her to test it out. While Sensei is fun and rebellious, she is also driven and hardworking. Whenever I arrive for my lesson and she is not teaching a student, I catch Sensei doing some sort of handy work such as building an office chair or hacking tangerines off of a massive tree in her yard.

up. As a result of the challenges and struggles she endured, to this day, Sensei devotes herself entirely to her students and to the dissemination of *minyo* in California.

The function of *minyo* has changed in Japan with modernity and in the United States through transnational movement into new contexts. As Mark Slobin states, “we need to think of music as coming from many places and moving among many levels of today’s societies” (Slobin 1993:x). In the United States, *minyo* is not received in the same ways it is in Japan. On the most basic level, the meanings of the lyrics are unclear, and moreover, the prefecture-specific variations of *minyo* can’t be appreciated without knowledge of those regions and their specialties. In Japan, *minyo* still functions as a symbol of local pride amongst prefectures by showcasing its local specialties and products (*meibutsu*) and distinctive dialects. Slobin notes how an individual’s diasporic network shows “how complex the relationship of even a single musician to his place of origin can be, when the putative ‘homeland’ has to be understood as a complex of locales, styles, and even families” (ibid.:65). *Minyo* as a genre encompasses the variations in Japanese locales through regionally specific songs, as well as styles through contrasting renditions of songs by different *sensei* and performers, and families through dissimilarities amongst *iemoto* schools. Although *minyo* as a genre carries these intricacies, it is often simply regarded in a diasporic context as “traditional Japanese music.” As such, Sensei takes advantage of the malleability of *minyo* in diaspora by using it as a tool to educate the American community about Japanese culture by commanding attention as an authority of the genre as well as by selectively implementing aspects of Japanese societal expectations and her *sensei*’s teachings and style into her pedagogy.

Much of Sensei's success as a *minyō* teacher and performer in California stems from her willingness to deconstruct the regimented and structured teaching methods associated with Japan, and her personality-driven ability to command attention and authority.

In this section, I trace the characteristics that have made Sensei such a successful pedagogue in diaspora by considering her as a charismatic leader with the power to control her students both on and off stage. A.J. Racy addresses the issue of representation, stating how we need to create a balance between representation and individuality by regarding a music teacher in diaspora both as an artist in her own right and as someone who provides access to another musical tradition. He notes how, "in a way, we are studying the teacher's musical mind. As Clifford Geertz might have put it, we are interpreting an interpretation. We may view the teacher as a 'text' to be studied and appreciated as such" (Racy 2004:160). On the one hand, Sensei is certainly a representation of *minyō* in California as a native expert; yet, her individuality, particularly when informed by her personality, also contributes to her ability to maintain so much respect and power.

Quite a bit of scholarship has addressed teacher-student relationships in South and Southeast Asian music traditions. Through her discussion of the *wai khruu* ritual in Thailand, which honors teachers of music and dance, Deborah Wong (2001) presents the Thai belief that knowledge is power, and that teachers are "the ultimate source of all knowledge in traditional Thai thought" (Wong 2001:62). While Sensei's pedagogical methods do not have any direct connection to ritual practices, she certainly encourages the idea that musicking, particularly performance, informs and is informed by our daily

activities, interactions, and realities. Sensei believes that our interactions with each other offstage, construct our ability to perform together as one musical entity under a group *nami*, and that the satisfaction from this unity also improves our social interactions. Sensei's lessons are by no means restricted to a transmission of the music itself, and in fact, are more importantly informed by her innate ability to connect with her students, gain their trust, and simultaneously encourage and discipline, all through her personality.

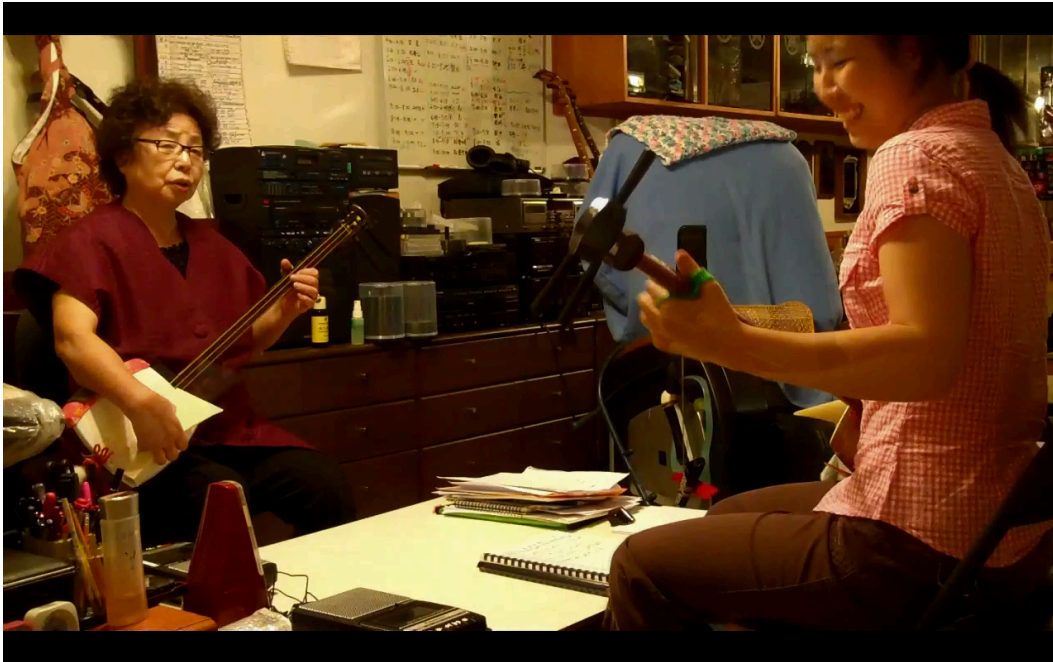
Traditional teacher-student relationships such as *khruu* and *luuk sit* in Thailand, *guru* and *shishya* in India, and ultimately *sensei* and *deshi* in Japan model and dictate a relationship between an all-knowing teacher and an acquiescent disciple. Sensei aims for this type of relationship with her students, but in a modified and forgiving fashion. She once professed that she is bossy and that is the reason why our group is one of the more disciplined Japanese music groups in the United States.

As the only individual in Matsutoyo Kai who can sing and accompany herself on the *shamisen* for any *minyo* song on demand, Sensei is the ultimate bearer of knowledge and power. It is not solely her extensive knowledge of the repertoire that commands respect; it is her ability to strategically shape shift between varying personas that makes her effective. She intimidates her students; she makes learning enjoyable through humor; she captivates an audience using both skill and charm; she portrays herself as the leader and authority of Matsutoyo Kai. At times, Sensei can be brutally honest, particularly when I or any other students have failed to practice between lessons. She simply says, "you haven't practiced this week. Unless you put in the time, I can't take you to the next

level,” before proceeding with a lesson that enforces practice skills through repetition (either *hassei* [voice expulsion] or repeated *shamisen* strokes).

2/12/2013

*Sensei got very technical today focusing on my bachi hand and correcting the way I strike. (Figure 6) She said that everything should be a triangle (the space between the thumb and index finger, the angle of the wrist to the shamisen body and the way the bachi is struck). I have a habit of striking downwards instead of towards the fingerboard, which inhibits me from producing a nice, resonant sound. Sensei kept correcting the way I strike, and after a while, I felt as though she was saying “NO! Chigau (wrong),” before I even struck. My pinkie kept drifting away from the bachi, so Sensei created a “pinkie holder” by applying masking tape to my bachi to create a little slot for my pinkie.*



**Figure 6 My *shamisen* lesson with Sensei. (Screenshot taken by Nana Kaneko.)**

*After a while, I started to understand how to strike, but it will be difficult to undo my bad habits. As we worked on specific pieces, I started to get so engaged with the notation that I didn't realize my left arm moving the neck of the shamisen further and further away from my body. At one point Sensei started to laugh and said I looked like Pinocchio all contorted and knotted up. That did it. We both had a laughing fit for a good minute or two. She told me to keep working on my bachi hand, and to focus on keeping my left arm back, and to keep practicing in front of a mirror so I can keep track of my posture.*

When Sensei offers a critique, she often presents it in a humorous manner because she realizes that she can't be as direct and strict as teachers in Japan if she wants to successfully transmit the tradition in diaspora. Sensei's ability to assert her authority, while also making jokes and having fun, is one of the ways that she maintains a committed group of students.

In the public eye, Sensei is a widely admired and respected individual. (Figure 7) On the rare occasions when she performs on stage, she immediately captivates the audience through her warm and pleasant emceeding and infectious smile, before singing with an impressively powerful voice, often holding the microphone at her waist. In addition to her admirable stage persona, Sensei carries herself with utmost confidence in public, often with a somewhat stern look on her face, as her students follow loyally behind her. I have been using the word charisma to describe Sensei because she is not simply an authority who expects her students to bend over backwards for her; she has an ability to make her students want to please her because she shares a persona with us that is not simply that of a dictatorial teacher. Indeed, her pedagogical methods fit more closely with Wong's definition of pedagogy, which is not only teaching, "...but also more broadly the field of relational power and control created by the transmission of knowledge" (Wong 2001:6). This power and control is further elucidated when considering the ways that Sensei constructs social relations.



**Figure 7 Sensei with Marisa (left) and Natsu (right) in the 2012 Nisei Week parade as a Pioneer Award recipient.<sup>11</sup> (Photo by Nana Kaneko.)**

Sensei sees her students as bearers of particular personalities, but also sees the promise of sculpting them to reach their full potential not only as performers on stage, but also as performers in society; thus encouraging a performativity where performance creates social realities. Ted Solís addresses the pedagogical goals and compromises of world music ensemble teachers, noting how “all the ensembles represented here proceed via intragroup cues, markers, and mutual stimulation rather than via the central authoritative model exemplified by the Western conductor” (Solís 2004:14), and that through these ensembles, “one becomes vitally aware of issues of self and other”

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<sup>11</sup> The Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Southern CA nominated Sensei for the award for her contribution to the community and her dedication to *minyo*.

(ibid.:16). Sensei strategically masks her level of authority over the group by constantly encouraging group respect. She is different from the Western conductor as described by Solís because she uses her authority to encourage her students to not only listen to her, but also to work collaboratively and interactively with each other not only as musicians, but also as members of Matsutoyo Kai. Although Sensei's use of *nami* as her internal pulse demands a conceptual, affective understanding of her authority, I believe that the main message she aims to relate through it is the need for communication even when it is not explicitly solicited.

Daniel M. Neuman provides an in-depth description of the *gharana* system in India, which is comparable to the Japanese *iemoto* system in many ways. He describes the relationship between the *guru* and his disciple in its ideal form and essential nature as "...the devotion of the disciple to his guru and the love of the guru for his disciple. Without love and devotion there can be no communication, and communication is the fundamental requisite of this relationship – the communication of a tradition" (Neuman 1980:45). While Sensei neither expects nor demands utmost devotion from her students, she does emphasize (though often indirectly) the need to listen and communicate through her *nami* metaphor. I am convinced that she believes that these skills, though seemingly simple, are lacking, particularly in American society, and that by learning them through musical performance, her students will be better equipped to behave respectfully in their daily lives. Neuman states how as "practitioners of the art and purveyors of its heritage, musicians are the mediators of their music culture" (ibid.:27). As a musician with an understanding of the social and cultural environment of both Japan and the United States,

Sensei functions as a mediator between the two cultures by implementing characteristics from both into her teaching.

In Japanese, the word charisma (カリスマ) is presented as a loan word and used to describe someone who is able to draw others in through their personality (*kosei*) and charm/appeal (*miriyoku*). Charisma is also defined as an extraordinary ability to command leadership (*hibon na tousotsuryoku*).<sup>12</sup> While I have not heard any other students use the aforementioned words to describe Sensei, they often characterize her as *subarashii*, which means splendid, glorious, and great. Unlike *charisma* and *miriyoku*, *subarashii* is not limited to describing people, but also things such as the weather, view, and even ideas and actions. *Subarashii* implies a sense of admiration, and while it does not directly address Sensei's character as the source of her admirability, it does illustrate the command she has of her students and the respect that they have for her as an authority figure.

The display of respect towards Sensei culminates at the end of every lesson with a formal *ojigi* (bow). Sensei is particularly pleased when in addition to a seated bow immediately after the lesson, students sit on their knees on the floor by the door, place both hands in front of them with fingers stuck together, and bow deeply. Sensei always returns the gesture and once noted how the *ojigi* should make students feel refreshed as

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<sup>12</sup> In Thai ritual, an officiant must have *baaramii*, translated by Wong as “greatness” or “virtue.” She notes how “it is the aura that comes from taking right action and leading by example, and it accumulates with age and experience” (Wong 2001:161). While I am not arguing that Sensei has *baaramii* in the same way that Thais see it in their officiants, she exudes similar characteristics when demonstrating extensive knowledge and technical ability as well as the charismatic power to inspire faith and confidence in her students.

they take the time to show respect in a hectic society where such acts are rarely performed. By extending her teachings beyond the music, and more towards lessons in social relations and proper behavior, Sensei's "multifaceted approach to teaching" (Racy 2004:161), allows her to excel as a highly respected transmitter of *minyo* in California. Sensei's adjusted pedagogy is best understood when considering Japanese musical aesthetics and societal expectations, and how these must be reconfigured in diaspora.

### **Japanese Aesthetics and Music in Diaspora**

2/17/2012

*Sensei brought up an anecdote about how when she was about my age and living in Japan, she used to go to a deserted beach and sing loudly against the sound of the waves. She added how this was a great challenge and required the most effort in projecting than any other space, but how rewarding it was to hear her sound expand, carry out, and slowly dissipate into the horizon.*

Henry Johnson notes that "...Japanese music in terms of sound aesthetics contributes to an ethnomusicology that is able to include holistically the study of sounds, concepts, and human behaviour, and attempt to understand aspects of cultures through an anthropology of sound" (Johnson 1999:292). He traces the history of words in Japan used to describe what John Blacking (1973) has called "humanly organized sounds," starting with the word *asobi* (play/amusement) in the Heian Period (794-1185), then a shift to music as a severe discipline and a way of art, influenced by Buddhism and *bushido* (the way of the warrior) during the Kamakura Period (1185-1333), then the adoption of the word *myuzikku* (a Japanese phonetic version of the English word music) to denote Western music during the Meiji Period (1868-1912). The word *ongaku* (*on*-sound, *gaku*-music/pleasure), however, is most commonly used to refer to music, bringing back the

connotation of leisure. The division of *ongaku* into *hogaku* (traditional Japanese music) and *yogaku* (Western music) creates a conspicuous dichotomy, suggesting that the two categories are vastly different in theory and practice.

Sensei frequently refers to the division between *hogaku* and *yogaku*, stating how the discrepancies between the two go beyond the music itself and are reflections of those respective societies. She regards Japanese society as a hierarchical vertical line, where instructors are treated with utmost respect because of the values instilled through *keigo* (honorifics) and an expectation of subordination towards people of a higher rank. In contrast, she views American society as a democratic horizontal line, where instructors are treated as comparatively equal peers. While the difference between Japan and the United States cannot be simply stated as hierarchical versus democratic, Sensei argues that Japanese music cannot come together in the United States in the same way that it does in Japan, precisely because the notion of utmost respect and subordination in the Japanese sense does not exist in the United States.

Sensei's pedagogical methods, while embracing aspects of what Yuriko Saito calls the Japanese aesthetic tradition, "...morally based by promoting respect, care, and consideration for others, both humans and nonhumans" (Saito 2007:85), also go beyond the stereotypical aesthetic associations with traditional Japanese music such as symbolic techniques that reflect nature and "flirt with the deepest concepts of silence" (Johnson 1999:298). The association between traditional Japanese music and the aesthetics of nature, delicacy, and organization in a superficial sense are often overly emphasized or even romanticized, so I aim to illustrate how Sensei's *nami* differs from those sorts of

generalizations. Johnson analyzes environmental sounds referenced in Japanese music, noting how sound effects played on instruments are used as symbolic ornamentation to illustrate environmental sounds audibly, visually, and symbolically (ibid.:299). In contrast to Johnson's rudimentary understanding of environmental references in Japanese music, Sensei's *nami* is not simply a vocal or *shamisen* technique that emulates the movement of waves; it is informed by her understanding of the discrepancies between Japanese and American society.

2/9/2013

*I arrived at Sensei's studio at 6pm for an ACTA (Alliance for California Traditional Arts)<sup>13</sup> orientation meeting, to discuss the procedures for the six-month apprenticeship.*

*The ACTA apprenticeship coordinator asked a few questions about our individual plans for the apprenticeship and more general questions about minyo in America. As far as the plans for the apprenticeship, I answered that my immediate goal is to be able to sing and play the shamisen simultaneously rather effortlessly and that my long-term goal is to receive a natori (professional performer status) and teach.*

*When I asked Sensei about her goals for my apprenticeship, she talked about how her goal for her students this year is to get them to understand her nami (wave/flow) and to be able to connect with her without her having to explicitly spell things out. She wants to teach all her students individually, yet have them all connect to her so that when we are all on stage together, if we all practiced with our focus centered on Sensei's nami, we should be in sync. She noted how the majority of her current students have background in other Western instruments and that this hinders their abilities since they have this sort of false air/confidence as accomplished musicians in another instrument. After this, she answered the question more directly, stating how she is getting old and seeking to teach younger students who can carry on the tradition. She stated that she wants minyo to continue on for at least another 100 years.*

To elaborate on her understanding of Japan as a vertical society and the United States as a horizontal one, Sensei compared the medical systems of those respective

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<sup>13</sup> The Alliance for California Traditional Arts promotes and supports ways for cultural traditions to thrive now and into the future by providing advocacy, resources, and connections for folk and traditional artists. Sensei and I were accepted into the 2013 ACTA Apprenticeship Program, which supported my lesson fees for the year.

societies. She claimed that the American medical system requires part-by-part specialists who are so preoccupied with their own expertise that they are often unable to target a medical problem that impacts, but does not exist in, that area of the body. Conversely, Japanese medical procedures account for ways where the total issue can be assessed from a section. She gave the example of how she was having severe back pain in Japan, and after visiting an acupuncturist, he was able to determine through the back pain, that she in fact had gall stones. This is not to say that Japanese medical practice is better and more reliable than that in the United States, but that the procedures to target an issue are different, and often more holistic. Sensei suggests that the difference between Japanese and Western music lies not only in oral versus written differences, but also in the ways that music is experienced. She observed that Western musical ensembles emphasize individual parts through the distribution of individual scores that can only come together through the direction of a conductor who must stand directly in front of them and explicitly lead them. Traditional Japanese music, she claims, is about the totality of the music, where parts connect through *mienai mono* (*mienai*, [can't be seen]; *mono*, [things]; things that cannot be seen/simply a feeling) by understanding the leader's timing and feeling (her *nami*) with their bodies. Unlike Western notions of meter such as 3/4 for a waltz, Japanese music has several changes within a piece based on the leader's feeling, and it is this difference in taste from *sensei* to *sensei* and the need to follow and respect her decision without explicit direction that structures traditional Japanese music.

William P. Malm notes how in traditional practice, a *sensei* gives lessons on certain days at certain places, but not at specific times for each student. This forces

students to observe and take in other students' lessons, while patiently waiting for their turn (Malm 1986:25). American students generally expect immediate attention upon entering the studio and Sensei has adjusted her lessons to an American sense of time by ensuring that she remains on schedule and that students are attended to at their respective times. She does, however, maintain a sense of Japanese time by sometimes encouraging students to stay and observe other lessons, suggesting that it is far easier to assess errors when they are someone else's and not your own. This is one of many ways Sensei places her organization, Matsutoyo Kai, at the intersection of different pedagogical and cultural expectations. In order to achieve this, Sensei has situated Matsutoyo Kai in a diasporic intercultural where methods from both national boundaries are negotiated by considering how she can interrelate aspects of both cultures through her teaching.

Sean Ichiro Manes (2009) provides insight into the pedagogical methods of his Japanese American *shamisen* teacher by tracing how she transmits a Japanese art music tradition to the Japanese American community. Of all the Japanese student-teacher relationships that I have read about (Malm 1986; Sellers-Young 2002; Keister 2004; Hahn 2007), Manes's descriptions of his teacher most closely resemble Sensei precisely because of the emphasis he places on her idiosyncrasies as a transmitter of a traditional Japanese musical tradition in an American setting. He presents his teacher, Mary Yamamura, as somewhat rebellious and willing to break the rules of tradition in order to transmit her knowledge in ways that are more easily accessible to students who are not accustomed to the "Japanese way" of pedagogical transmission. While Yamamura and

Sensei's methods are certainly different, the similarities in their pedagogical goals deserve an extended comparison of these two pedagogues.

Yamamura and Sensei tend to break the rules of the traditional *iemoto* system through idiosyncratic experimentation, and are willing to do whatever it takes to get their students to understand various concepts. Manes describes a scenario where Yamamura taught a student who was struggling with the *jiuta*-style of *shamisen* strumming, by mixing styles (forbidden in the *iemoto* system, which is concerned with preservation), and teaching him using the *nagauta* style of *shamisen* playing, which ultimately resulted in success (Manes 2009:45). Sensei's idiosyncratic experimentations generally tend towards the physical; that is, she invents seemingly crazy, yet effective ways for her vocal students to understand the trying concept of tightening the core and lower half of the body, while removing pressure from the shoulders up when singing. Marisa and Natsu confirmed that *minyo* teachers in Japan never use such methods.

Whenever my voice would start to waver during lessons, Sensei would throw a cushion on the floor and have me lie on my stomach and lift up into a "Superman position" as I shouted sustained notes. As my core started to strengthen, Sensei searched for heavy objects for me to lift as I expelled my voice. During one lesson, she handed me a couple of weights that I lifted with ease, then handed me a small *taiko* to lift instead. When this was not effective, she rolled over a leather office chair and had me lift it with the weights on it. When the weights started to roll around and were a potential threat to my bare feet, Sensei pointed to the large *hira daiko* suspended on a wooden frame and

had me bring it over. By lifting this taiko by the wooden frame bar, it functioned as the perfect weight to work my core as I sang.

Matthew Rahaim (2012) provides insightful descriptions about various physical gestures that are used by Hindustani vocalists as they sing. He notes how in the same way that individuals go to medical doctors for a diagnosis of a medical disorder, he trusted his vocal teacher to diagnose the bad habits of his musicking body. Rahaim coined the phrase *paramparic body* to describe “embodied musical dispositions that are passed down through generations of teachers and students, with no single recognizable author” (Rahaim 2012:108) from the word *parampara*, which refer to the chains of transmission between teachers and students. He describes transmission in terms of imprints, noting how he has come to recognize the imprint of his teacher’s teacher on his teacher, and the imprint of his teacher on himself, and perhaps more importantly, he recognizes this as “...the transmission of paramparic bodies (the disciplined disposition of a particular singer’s musicking body, developed over many years of training and practice)” (ibid.:8-9). While Rahaim focuses on gestures as a means of transmitting learned knowledge down to a student, Sensei is also transmitting her “paramparic body” to her students through physical exercises that enable them to feel what parts of the body should be tightened and loosened when the voice is expelled. Sensei often declares that she can’t stick her hand down my throat to make adjustments, and that she can only provide hints about the ways that she feels her body adjusting to produce different sounds and encourages me to experiment with my own body parts when I practice singing at home.

In addition to physical pedagogical idiosyncrasies, Sensei uses verbal explicitness, which is derived from her understanding of American culture and language as far more explicit than Japanese. Manes notes how his teacher did not follow all of the traditional Japanese modes of instruction and transmission, and “when asked as to how and why she has changed some pedagogical procedures, Mary [*sic*: his teacher] clarified that in a traditional Japanese lesson, there is little explanation, and students are expected to discern most musical practices through listening and example” (Manes 2009:46-47). It is somewhat surprising that Manes refers to his teacher by her first name because student-teacher relationships in traditional Japanese musical practices are often quite formal, even in diaspora. Since Yamamura is a Japanese American teacher, and not a teacher from Japan, the first name basis is not particularly unusual. Yet, as a teacher who is consciously aware of differences between Japanese and American culture who is striving to transmit a traditional Japanese musical tradition, it would be more appropriate if she had her student call her *sensei* out of respect. Sensei has critiqued the first name basis relationship between teachers and students in the United States, noting how it tends to take away from the teacher’s ability to maintain authority by putting her on an equal plane with the student. Although Sensei may use verbal explicitness when necessary in her teaching, she neither supports nor tolerates nominal informalities that undermine a respectful relationship between teacher and student.

Yamamura stated that explanation was necessary for her American students, particularly when trying to convey concepts and techniques that are untranslatable. Manes provides the example of *hazumi*, which according to Yamamura, describes a

certain type of tone, similar to the concept of “bounce” in Western music, but a little different (ibid.:46). Unlike Yamamura, who emphasizes the need to maintain Japanese terminology in her pedagogy because certain words are untranslatable (even though she ultimately uses English words to describe *hazumi*), as addressed earlier, Sensei utilizes another Japanese term that she deems more explicit (*nami*), as a metaphoric tool to explain *hazumi*, which allows her to present the concept without having to translate. With a majority of students who are fluent in Japanese, Sensei does not have to deal with translation issues as often. She generally avoids linguistic translations altogether by refusing to teach in English even to her Chinese American students. Yet, her pedagogical methods are filled with techniques that translate tradition, often rendering them more explicitly, in a diasporic context.

Additionally, Yamamura stated that the most difficult concept for her American students to grasp was the concept of *ma* (the concept of space between events). William P. Malm defines *ma* as a hidden aspect of time in Japanese music, the space between events that provides a rhythmic elasticity in which silence is as powerful as sound (Malm 1986:43). Manes’s teacher defines it as something that is in everything including architecture, art, and music, and that in music, it is best defined as timing, but more so the space between the notes. Ultimately, she concludes that it cannot be explained and the way she relays the concept to her students is by exhibiting books of Japanese art, and talking about the importance of space in Japanese aesthetics. Manes writes, “Mary professed that ‘ma’ was so central to the Japanese aesthetic, such that a true master can ascertain if a student has understood it just by listening to three notes (or more accurately,

the space between the notes), and thus reject or accept students on this basis” (Manes 2009:47-48). While Yamamura strives to incorporate tangible examples of *ma* into her pedagogical method through art books and poignant stories, Sensei simply says that there is a *ma*, and relates it to the *nami* as a way of explaining it. She often refers to an *ura ma* (back space), which punctuates the flow of the *nami* through a wispy breath. She states how the *ura ma* makes a song tasteful by providing a break between two powerful notes, while contributing to the flow of the *nami*.

This brings us full circle to Sensei’s *nami* and its effectiveness in relaying concepts that are linked to Japanese cultural and social expectations and not commonplace in the United States. Sensei has adapted her pedagogical methods to American sensibilities, while also maintaining the aspects of Japanese tradition that she deems significant and accessible. The *nami* functions as a tool for her to rearticulate Japanese aesthetics in ways that are less implicit, and Sensei employs her charisma to inspire students to comply with her definitions of *nami*. Thus, the *nami* ultimately encompasses everything that Sensei is trying to transmit as a pedagogue of traditional Japanese music in diaspora.

Yamamura describes teaching traditional Japanese music in the United States as bridging the two cultures of the old with the new (Manes 2009:42). I would argue that Sensei doesn’t necessarily regard teaching *minyo* in the United States as a bridging of the two cultures, but as transmitting *minyo* as authentically as possible to and in a diasporic setting through translated pedagogical methods. Sensei as an individual embodies *minyo* as a cultural phenomenon that changes through transnationalism and social interactions.

Jay Keister argues, “Japanese music has not been sufficiently analyzed as an aspect of Japanese culture using methodologies that have become common in ethnomusicology” (Keister 2004:3). Person-centered ethnographies enable a move away from codified, armchair analyses of Japanese traditional music by emphasizing a study of the music in its cultural context. Keister suggests that person-centered ethnographies also provide a way of understanding music in its cultural context “without constructing totalizing, essentialist models of musical culture that overlook the actual practices of individuals which constitute the human life in music” (ibid.:4). Sensei serves as an ideal candidate for a person-centered ethnography because she embodies aspects of both Japanese and American culture, and her pedagogical methods function as a diasporic intercultural that makes cultural links across national boundaries.

## Conclusions

9/30/2012

*When I arrived at the Orange County Buddhist Church for our Senior Appreciation Day performance, Sensei, Yu Matsutoyo, Mine Matsutoyo, Chie Matsutoyo, and Momo<sup>14</sup> greeted me. This was the first performance where both Marisa and Natsu were unable to attend. Tension loomed in the air without their presence, and Sensei initiated a pre-performance rehearsal. She encouraged us to work together, particularly in the absence of our two main vocalists. We briefly went through each song, and Sensei urged Momo and me to try to sing the hayashi parts as high and loud as possible, demonstrating how it should sound several times. The vocalists for this performance included Mine Matsutoyo, Momo, and me, and Sensei unusually told us ahead of time that she will sing*

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<sup>14</sup> Yu Matsutoyo is Marisa Kosugi’s husband and Sensei’s son in law. He has a *natori* in *shamisen* and is also an accomplished jazz guitarist. Momo (age 22) is one of Sensei’s youngest students, and is learning *shamisen* and vocals. Chie Matsutoyo has been learning vocals and *shamisen* from Sensei for around twenty years with a *natori* in *shamisen*, and is Mine Matsutoyo’s older sister. Mine Matsutoyo, who was an extremely dedicated member of Matsutoyo Kai for twenty years with a *natori* in vocals, fell ill in January of this year. She sadly passed away on 4/29/2013. She had a lovely disposition, was always pleasant, and her commitment to the group will always be remembered.

*at the end. Mine Matsutoyo, who could sing just about any minyo song, was having difficulties with voice projection, so Sensei had her sing a song that Momo and I were familiar with and told us to make sure to cover for her and jump in if necessary. Lastly, Sensei informed me that I would need to emcee and that she and Momo will take turns on the taiko. Once the song list was confirmed, we headed towards the stage to perform. (Figure 8)*

*The performance went relatively smoothly and ended on a high note with Sensei's grand finale. As soon as I introduced Sensei, Momo hopped onto the taiko. Sensei humbly introduced her song as a "tsutanai uta," meaning a poor, clumsy, bad song, noted that she is singing as a replacement for Marisa, and asked that the audience listen to her song. During an extended hayashi section, Sensei pulled Mine Matsutoyo and me closer to her to share the microphone with her.*



**Figure 8 Performance at the Orange County Buddhist Church. From left to right: Momo, me, Sensei, Mine Matsutoyo, Yu Matsutoyo, Chie Matsutoyo. (Photo by Linda Kaneko.)**

This particular performance was not just about going on stage and getting through the songs in a technical manner. It tested our ability to communicate and work together, requiring additional effort on everyone's part in the absence of two core members. Ultimately, however, each performance is a test of how well we could listen to Sensei and how well we could work together as a team; they are all about collaboration under the authoritative umbrella of Sensei—by which I mean that Sensei is strict and demanding, yet she is nurturing, protective, cares deeply for her students, and looks out for us.

Sensei's authority stems from her success, starting with her ability to come to a new country in her twenties and to make a name for herself and gain respect through mastery of a craft. She has more freedom in the United States than in Japan and is able to run things the way she desires and not the way her teacher in Japan expected her to. She holds considerable authority in the Southern California Japanese American community because everyone knows her; indeed, she is a symbol of *minyō*. Some of her confidence stems from the fact that she started Matsutoyo Kai from the ground up instead of inheriting a school, as she would have in Japan.

As a transmitter of traditional Japanese music in the United States, Sensei's objective is to maintain as much authenticity as possible in the way the music is performed while also altering the ways in which it is presented and taught in diaspora. Slobin argues that diasporic networks have distinctive, complex internal structures because they do not only have a simple, direct relationship to the "homeland," and often also create new networks abroad (Slobin 1993:64). Sensei's pedagogical work constitutes

a diasporic intercultural exchange between Japan and the United States, and even as a diasporic music-making community, Matsutoyo Kai stays within community bounds and also tries to reach out to a wider population. On the one hand, Matsutoyo Kai performances within the Japanese and Japanese American community in California raise community consciousness of cultural heritage and even nostalgia for the local elderly Japanese population, while on the other hand, they also function as an introduction to traditional Japanese music through performances outside of the immediate community.

Sensei's homeland is not highly accessible to her because she left Japan voluntarily, essentially leaving her ostracized from her *iemoto* school, and needing to establish Matsutoyo Kai on her own. Su Zheng (2010) presents the transnational connections of Chinese American musicians in New York, stating how

in addition to their interaction with the sociocultural system of the host country as a localized ethnic population, Chinese American musicians are simultaneously at the diasporic intersection of various powers, interests, and conflicts between the heterogeneous society of Chinese Americans and their highly accessible homelands (Zheng 2010:268).

It was not until Sensei developed Matsutoyo Kai as a reputable *minyō* group that she was able to develop connections and expand her network throughout the Japanese American community in California as well as to *minyō* groups in Japan by hosting their performances in California. Zheng argues for "...a diasporic [*sic.*] cultural identification in Asian/Chinese America that cannot be reduced to a simple notion of either/or racial-ethnic binary within the nation-state boundaries" (ibid.:285-286). Through her informed understanding of both Japanese and American culture and societal expectations, Sensei serves as a particular case study that illustrates this point.

Although Sensei has striven to integrate *minyō* in California, she is very selective and strategic about how she mixes aspects of her “cultural roots” and her “new country” when transmitting *minyō*. In his discussion about music in the Cambodian diaspora, Giovanni Giurati presents four reactions that offer discursive responses to deepened integration into a new society. Khmer refugees either: 1. Return to the motherland; 2. Turn to the ‘cultural roots’ to develop a *metissage* (mixing/crossing) and creative innovation in the performing arts while remaining in the new country; 3. Give up performing once the urgent need to keep ‘endangered’ Khmer performing arts alive is no longer visible and perceived as a priority, and do something else less public and visible, in relation to Khmer culture, such as research or study; 4. Continue their activity among the refugees at a slower and less visible pace (Giurati 2005:138-139). Of the four preceding reactions, the way Sensei has striven to integrate *minyō* in California fits most closely with number two, yet, in her teaching, she does not explicitly blend and combine Western styles with *minyō*,<sup>15</sup> but instead takes what she deems the best of both teaching methods to create her own idiosyncratic style (and authority).

While my person-centered ethnography of Sensei has hopefully contributed to a discussion of *minyō* in a transnational cultural context, it has certainly not been without its challenges. Teacher-student relationships between a *sensei* and *deshi* require the student to behave subserviently and respectfully towards the teacher, and my relationship

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<sup>15</sup> Though in 2008, Sensei encouraged Marisa and Yu to create Minyo Station, a fusion band that blends traditional *minyō* with rock, jazz, and R&B, in order to make *minyō* more accessible for young Americans. The current members of Minyo Station include: Marisa (main vocals), Natsu (vocals and *kane*), Yu (guitar), Dane Matsumura (bass), Miles Senzaki (drums), Loryce Hashimoto (*shamisen*), Zan Matsutoyo (*shamisen*), and me (*taiko*).

with Sensei is no exception. The difficulty of shifting from the role of subordinate, admiring *minyō* student to critical ethnomusicologist has challenged me throughout the writing process. While a person-centered ethnography of someone near and dear offers the benefits of easy accessibility, it is difficult if not impossible to set aside the deep affective bonds that sustain the relationship—and the music. Ultimately, telling a person’s story in this way contributes to a kind of ethnomusicology where music and culture are wholly interconstitutive.

By focusing on Sensei and the various ways that she manages her position as an authoritative, charismatic, devoted pedagogue of *minyō* in California, I hope I have been able to demonstrate how person-centered ethnographies offer a close, particularized look at how culture is made, sustained, and transmitted. Coupled with the subjective presence and interpretations of the ethnographer in a self-reflexive mode, person-centered ethnographies of diasporic expressive culture reveal what Zheng deems “the manifold aspects of immigrant society,” (Zheng 2010:273) and the workings of the diasporic intercultural outlined by Slobin. He notes how ethnomusicologists argue that

it is not that music has nothing to say, but that it allows everyone to say what he or she wants. It is not because music negates the world, but because it embodies any number of imagined worlds that people turn to music as a core form of expression (Slobin 1993:78).

When music is interpreted as a cultural metaphor—in Sensei’s case the *nami* as an interworking metaphor for various aspects of her pedagogical method—an ethnomusicologist can study what Keister’s teacher calls “the human life in the music” (Keister 2004:1). *Minyō* is Sensei’s life, and it is precisely the ways she imbues her life experiences and cultural understandings into her teachings that offers us an understanding

of how much a single individual can reveal about music and the ways it is changed and maintained in diaspora.

*1/22/2013*

*As we were parting ways after my lesson, Sensei bowed again and thanked me, then stood outside her house and waited until I safely got into my car. As I drove past her and waved, she enthusiastically waved back and said, "see you next week!" I believe this is a ritual that will continue for many more years to come.*

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## Appendix I: Glossary

*Aite*: a companion or an opponent/adversary

*Asobi*: play/amusement

*Bachi*: a weighted, ivory or plastic plectrum for the *shamisen* and wooden drumstick for the *taiko*

*Bon odori*: communal dancing at summer festivals to honor the spirit of the ancestors

*Bushido*: the way of the warrior

*Deshi*: generic term for student

*Fumen*: musical notation

*Furu-kusai*: “smelling of old”; outdated

*Gagaku*: court orchestra music

*Gehin*: vulgar, unrefined, low

*Hassei*: vocalization, voice expulsion

*Hayashi*: accompanying vocals, a responsorial refrain in leader-chorus folk songs

*Hazumi*: a swing rhythm that generally implies a 6/8 meter

*Hibon*: extraordinary, uncommon, rare

*Hogaku*: traditional Japanese music

*Hozonkai*: preservation societies

*Iemoto*: a formalized, hierarchical master teacher (*sensei*) student (*deshi*) relationship

*Issei*: first generation Japanese Americans

*Jiuta*: an early *shamisen* genre

*Kai*: a group, organization, school, association

*Kane*: a bronze bell

*Kanji*: adopted logographic Chinese characters that are used in the modern Japanese writing system

*Keigo*: honorifics

*Kobushi (goro)*: general term for vocal ornamentation in folk song

*Kojien*: The Japanese equivalent of the Oxford English Dictionary

*Kosei*: Personality/individuality

*Ma*: The concept of space between events

*Meibutsu*: Region specific specialties and products

*Mienai mono*: things that cannot be seen

*Minyo*: Japanese folk songs that were historically working songs sung by laborers, and later adopted into a performative genre with the incorporation of musical instruments

*Myuzikku*: a Japanese phonetic version of the English word music

*Nagauta*: Song type associated with the *Kabuki* theatre

*Nami*: wave as in waves of the ocean

*Natori*: professional performer status and name obtained after years of dedication and a substantial mastery of a Japanese art form

*Nihon Buyo*: Japanese traditional dance

*Nikkei*: general term for Japanese diaspora, referring to Japanese immigrants from Japan and their descendants that reside in a foreign country

*Nisei*: second generation Japanese Americans

*Nisei Week*: an annual festival in Little Tokyo, Los Angeles, celebrating Japanese American culture and history

*Noh*: Japan's classic dance-drama genre

*Obon*: Japanese Buddhist festival to worship the spirit of the ancestors

*Odori*: dance

*Ojigi*: to bow

*Ongaku*: music (*on*-sound, *gaku*-music/pleasure)

*Otagai*: mutual, reciprocal feelings between two people emphasizing togetherness

*Sansei*: third generation Japanese Americans

*Sempai*: a person with more experience; a mentor

*Sensei*: generic term for teacher

*Shakuhachi*: an end-blown bamboo flute

*Shamisen*: a three-stringed plucked lute

*Shoji*: a sliding door consisting of translucent paper over a wooden frame

*Subarashii*: splendid, glorious, great

*Taiko*: a membranophone drum struck with two wooden sticks (*bachi*). The *shime daiko* (laced head high-pitched drum) and *hira daiko* (flat tacked head drum) are the most common in *minyo*

*Tatami*: woven straw flooring used in traditional Japanese style rooms

*Tousotsuryoku*: leadership, ability to command authority

*Uchi deshi*: a live-in student/apprentice who trains under and assists a *sensei* on a full-time basis

*Unagi don*: eel with rice

*Ura ma*: back space

*Yogaku*: Western music